

764 The interpretation of the chanting is "God has cheated me of a life." That is, God gave a life and he has taken it.

(123) My interpreter, who was a relative of the deceased boy, explained to the people that I was seriously interested. This was necessary, as they were afraid of ridicule and hostile opinion. I sat down by the father of the dead boy and talked with him through my interpreter. In the meantime I observed that the corpse was in a cloth-covered box slung on a pole, which was supported on the shoulders of two men who stood very close to the drummers. The bearers remained immovable except for the occasional changing of the coffin pole from one shoulder to another. At intervals women came out from the group to dance near the coffin, one, two, or three at a time. One boy was particularly energetic in leaping in front of the corpse. When the performers had danced they returned to the crowd from which other persons immediately advanced. These detached and spontaneous performances each lasted about two minutes.

After two hours the bearers of the coffin moved away, followed on one side by some of the men, on the other side by a few women. A large number of men and women remained behind with the drummers. The music and the solo dancing continued. The corpse was removed to a place about a hundred yards from the spot where the initial ceremonies had been performed. The bearers still held the coffin on their shoulders, while men and women seated themselves on each side of the bier. This part of the proceeding was solemn and there was little conversation, though tobacco-smoking continued among both men and women (Plate XLV, Fig. 1).

A woman about forty-five years of age held a plate of corn meal in her hand while she stood close to the corpse and in line with the bier. She addressed the corpse very earnestly and paused intermittently for a reply. While speaking, the woman looked intently at the foremost of the bearers, who both stood immovable with their heads inclined forward and eyes directed to the ground.

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602 My interpreter (Ngonga) said that the woman addressing the corpse was the oldest sister of the father of the dead boy, and that she was asking the spirit of the dead boy why he died. Here Ngonga threw a side light on family relationships.

The father of the dead boy was the son of Ngonga's mother's brother. The dead boy used to call Ngonga *tate* ("my father"); Ngonga called him *omolange* ("my child"). When the woman had addressed the corpse an old man took her place. He held up the

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Bailundo.¹³ On the kinship system, however, I was even more disappointed. The information which I was given on the matrilineal groups formerly existing was much less than that provided by Hastings,¹⁴ or by Childs,¹⁵ and I have therefore not been able to obtain the detail for which I had hoped on the double-descent system. 121

Like all anthropologists I had a certain number of difficulties in making contact with the people, and to these were added the problems of finding underlying consistencies in a changing society. The Ovimbundu are not interested in genealogies and did not see why I was. My first attempts to take village censuses were regarded with great suspicion, and more than once people refused to give their names. Kinship terms and norms seemed to be and were very confused. Various matters, such as surviving pagan rituals, were concealed from me. My personal relations with the people were very happy, however, and almost everybody who came to know me was prepared to answer my questions at length. 123

My two great problems in the field were to obtain information on the old social structure (which I already knew in outline from the written material), and to see how the present-day society worked. The material in this thesis will be laid out in the following way. The first part will give an outline of Umbundu social structure — it was in the period 1874-1911,¹⁶ that is, the era of the rubber trade. The second part will give a series of chapters on present day Umbundu society, which will provide the information necessary for an understanding of the mechanisms of social control. In the third part a detailed discussion of social control is made, beginning with an examination of a number of disputes. It is shown how the network of kinship and marriage ties in a neighbourhood provide local continuity and stability, while the wider units in which the Ovimbundu now participate are of European origin and control. 128

¹³ Camongue and Cela were tributary to Bailundo but were not incorporated into the actual kingdom (Childs, p. 168). Camongue people say that they are not Va-Mbailundo. 131

¹⁴ Hastings, Chapter VI.

¹⁵ Hastings gives more information than Childs on the matrilineal kin group.

¹⁶ The period of the rubber trade. Childs, pp. 202-15.

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578 having been elected according to traditional rules. Lusase
631 was angry at this, turned up at the ceremony, and attacked Sapapula.

627 The following morning Epalanga buzzed with indignation. Gregorio, the chief of Menga, and Mandumba, Sapapula's son, had arrived at Epalanga to express their support, and Gregorio asked me⁹ to write a letter to the Mission to get its support against Lusase at the post. I said that I would go to the chief's village to persuade Lusase to seek a reconciliation. The elder Wasuka, a cross-cousin of Sapapula, declared that even if Lusase offered five cattle in compensation they would not be accepted, and Sapapula's supporters portrayed him as a much injured man, repeatedly the victim of the Guilherme, Kapapelo, Lusase, Ndonga clique. My offer to go to the chief's village fell through when we heard that Lusase was now no longer there, but near, apparently at Simbwyikoka's.

I suggested that the moot should be held at Simbwyikoka's since the case had begun there; the others said 'No, let him come over here.' The crowd settled down in the open space before my house. News was then brought to us that Lusase refused to come over and insisted on the people coming to him, declaring that he ruled all, and did not obey the anthropologist but only the *chefe*. Accordingly everybody got up and walked over to Simbwyikoka's. Here we learnt that Lusase had fled. Kambungo¹⁰, an elder of Menga and kinsmen of Sapapula, declared that somebody who behaved like this could not be chief. Gregorio the chief of Menga became involved in an argument with Ndonga, who he said was responsible for installing Lusase. This Ndonga denied. This, incidentally, [634] was the first time that I had heard that Lusase was not properly elected. As previously noted on the fall of Kafelo, Lusase had arrived at the post and announced himself as being the new chief. The Gumba people did not protest about this for fear of possible reactions from the post.

It now became known that Lusase could not be found.

[123] ⁹ It may be suggested that my interventions were not in accordance with anthropological etiquette. It is difficult to see what else I could have done; it is, after all, the local custom for 'civilised' persons to provide letters of recommendation, and a refusal on my part would not have been understood.

¹⁰ He has been mentioned in Chapter V.